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"McCULLUM, Rodney" <rxm@nei.org> on 10/19/2001 06:30:51 AM

To: "YMP\_SR@ymp.gov" <YMP\_SR@ymp.gov>

cc:

Subject: Rod McCullum comments on a possible Yucca Mountain Site Recommendation  
Part of Records Package / Supplement / Correction



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This e-mail is in response to Lake Barret's August 28 letter to me asking for comments on the subject decision.

Regarding the general question of whether or not DOE should recommend the Yucca Mountain site - my answer is an emphatic "yes".

Although I am an employee of the Nuclear Energy Institute, I am making these comments as a private citizen (please do not consider this redundant to my earlier submission of NEI's comments under the same e-mail address). My belief that Yucca Mountain is the right thing to do is not a function of my job, but of the fundamental reasons why I chose a career in the nuclear field to begin with. I care about the future of our planet.

As a father of two young children, I want them to grow up in a world where the air is clean and energy is plentiful. Also, in the wake of recent events, I am more concerned than ever about wanting them to grow up in a world that is secure. Going forward with Yucca Mountain supports all of these goals. It is simply not acceptable from an environmental, energy, or national security standpoint to continue to leave the byproducts of nuclear technology scattered across over a hundred communities in 40 States.

Regarding the specific questions asked in Mr.. Barret's letter, I give the following answers:

Question #1: Are DOE's scientific documents adequate to support a site recommendation? My answer is "yes." I have reviewed these documents in great detail in my capacity as an employee of NEI. I am a nuclear engineer with 18 years of experience, most of it in the area of nuclear safety. My well informed conclusion is that these documents show that a repository at Yucca Mountain will be safe.

Question #2: If the Secretary determines that the science says Yucca Mountain will meet safety standards, should he recommend the site? My answer is "yes." Science tells us that Yucca Mountain will be safe. Our national best interests tell us that we should not turn our backs on a safe site for any political reason. The Secretary should move forward as quickly as possible.

Question #3 Are there reasons that should prevent the President from determining that the Yucca Mountain Site is qualified? My answer is "no." Because this decision involves looking forward far into the future, many opponents of the project will cite any of a number of things that we don't know about the future as reasons for not making the decision. Never before in the history of mankind has an entire nation decided that, because it doesn't know the future, it doesn't want to go there. The best science we have today tells us that Yucca Mountain is the right thing to do. Tomorrow's science may tell us even more, it may even tell us some things that are different. But the several decades that it will take to load and then close Yucca Mountain provide ample opportunity to learn from and adjust to new knowledge. This is why the National Academy of Sciences has recommended a "step-wise" approach. This decision is merely the first of many such steps. We should not fail to act on this decision out of fear of the unknown. We should act based on what we do know. Fear is the enemy of freedom.

Questions #4 and #5. I choose not to answer these questions. They inquire about what else the Secretary might do to meet the Government's obligation to dispose of these materials if Yucca Mountain is not recommended. It is a national imperative that the Secretary meet this disposal obligation, our nation's future depends on it. At a time when 20 years of world class scientific research is telling us how this obligation can be safely met, we should not be losing focus and taking steps backwards.

Question #6 Other comments. I just want to thank the people at DOE and its contractors for their hard work and perseverance. My job causes me to meet with the project's employee's frequently. I know they have gone to great lengths to complete this massive scientific task. Many personal sacrifices have undoubtedly been made in the course of this effort. In return, the project's employees are often scorned and criticized. They deserve our nation's sincerest appreciation and thanks.

thanx for considering these comments

Rod McCullum, Millersville, MD

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